

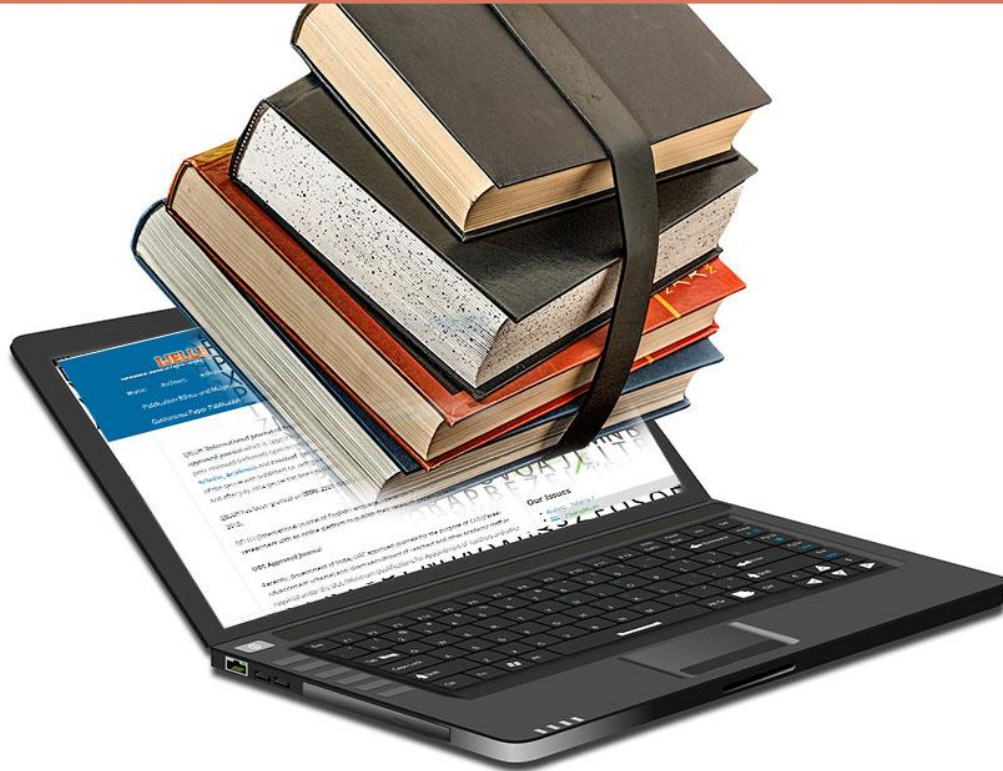
**ISSN** INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER

ISSN-2321-7065

**IJELLH**

# International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed), UGC Approved Journal



## Volume 7, Issue 3, March 2019

[www.ijellh.com](http://www.ijellh.com)

Ms.K.Bhuvaneswari

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English,

Sudharsan College of Arts and Science,

Perumanadu, Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu, India.

anbhuvana2007@gmail.com

Dr.P.Kumaresan

Associate Professor, Department of English,

Sudharsan College of Arts and Science,

Perumanadu, Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu,India.

Marital Disharmony in Anita Nair's  
"The Betterman" and "Lessons in Forgetting"

Abstract

Anita Nair is one of the Indian woman writers who encourage women's identity through her works. Anita Nair is an original talent and has the courage to go her own way of writing. She explored different aspects of feminine psyche which also includes man-woman relationships. In a marriage, adjustment for the woman only means completely deleting her individuality, herself, her conscience. It affects her entire psyche and behavior which destroys her sensibility and her very self. Her novels are mainly concerned with the theme of disharmony between husband and wife relationship. The aim of present research paper is to study the marital discord in her novels like "The Better man" and "Lessons in Forgetting".

Keywords: Human Relationships, Dissimilarities, Estrangement between husband and wife.

In Indian society, marriage plays a vital role. Marriage makes relationship between man and woman that legitimizes a sexual and economic union. Marriage is very important for both men and women in India. In most cases, male continues to live in his original house and marriage does not affect his roles as a son or a brother. His privileges towards life will be the same before and after the marriage. No doubt, he has to handle a new responsibility in his life, but that will not change his entire life. He will become the head of the family and this aspect will work in his favour completely.

On the other hand, life of women after marriage undergoes significant transformation. She has to leave her parent's house and move to a completely new environment. She has to build relationship with all the close relatives of her husband. Her role is more definite and her duties are more specific than those of the husband and she has to adhere to the set pattern of conduct. In Indian society, a married woman had to take care of her husband and his family. Traditionally all male are dominance and all female are dependence.

Indian writing in English have achieved an important place through the works of writers like Amitav Ghosh, Khushwant Singh, Salman Rusdie etc. They have written on various themes such as innerlife, nostalgia and introspection, quest for identity, impact of the west on Indian life and values. However, Indian woman writing in English has a new experience which is rapidly gaining relavance by the works of writers such as Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapoor etc. Women writers in India mostly focus on patriarchal domination and discrimination, while male authors deal with self-assertion and affiliation. These are the major differences between male and female authors.

The first generation women novelists wrote mainly to voice their concern and sympathize with the sufferings of Indian women, rather than to censure the society. The post Independence India witnessed a spirit of writing fictions by women writers of greater quality and depth. Kamala Markandaya, an outstanding novelists presents a cross section of the traditional society in post-independent India, where her female protagonists are inquest of their autonomy.

Nayantara Sahgal delineates with keen perception and sensitivity the problems and sufferings of women in marriage, who feels entrapped, oppressed and doomed to the care of husband and home and show her own reaction in her novels. Most of her women protagonists are aware of the injustice meted out to them in marriage. Anita Desai differs from other writers through her method of psychological exploration, lonely and sensitive. The isolation and insecurities that her characters suffer is underlined and the growth of the women is from self-alienation to self-identification. Bharathi Mukherjee liberates her women protagonists for a 'New World Order'. Her portrayal of women is inspired by her experience in India as well as in abroad. Her protagonists are sensitive and they lack a stable sense of personal and cultural identity.

All Indian women is yet to seek identity as a human being with equal status in the family in which she is born and in the family to which she is given in marriage. Girls grow up with a notion of their temporary membership within the natal home. They soon realize the inevitability of their eventual transfer from the natal home to that of the husband. Adjustment is primarily the young wife's duty, both in the marital relationships and in relation to her in-laws. Celly Ann remarks, "Self- abnegation, surrender of personal will, dependability and denial of the right to individuality are made to her lot. Not self-assertion, but self-denial, not self-awareness, but role-fulfilment is expected of her by society, with its entrenched ideas of male dominance" (6)

In contemporary Indian writing in English fiction by women writers provides “insight, a wealth of understanding, a reservoir of meanings and a basis of discussion. Through women writer’s eyes we can see a different world”. Anita Nair as a writer is to a large extent different from her contemporaries as well as her predecessors, and her fiction explores problems and issues relating to contemporary middle class women. Her women protagonists are sensitive, intelligent and career-oriented. She does not merely describe the pathetic life style of Indian women, but also tries to understand and suggest measures for amelioration.

Anita Nair has highlighted marital discord as a serious concern in her works. Anita Nair while choosing marital discord as a theme, highlights how the lack of ability to put bare one’s soul and convey freely one’s fear and agony result in the snap of communication between husband and wife resulting in conjugal disharmony. Nair’s novels represent intense study of the personal life, the conflicts and anxiety which the females face. The characters of Anita Nair are trapped in the web of unreceptive circumstances. In the novels of Anita Nair, most of the protagonists find themselves trapped in marriage. Her novels are mostly concerned with feminist point of view and portray the unhappy or unsuccessful marriage relationship which often leads to disaffection and lonesomeness of the characters.

Anjana in Anita Nair’s ‘The Betterman’ is the female protagonist of the novel. As Maya in Anita Desai’s ‘Cry the Peacock’ is a happy pampered child who has been brought up in a fairy world, ill-equipped to cope with reality. Likewise, Anjana is a happy girl and she is brought up in a liberal atmosphere by her parents. She is happy in her world of independence which gives her a profound sense of self fulfillment. When her age turned twenty seven her independence is lost in the name of marriage. As K.Deepa remarks, “Marriage cuts off a woman from the mainstream of life and pulls back her from achieving her goals”.

Anjana is married to Ravindran, “ Ravindran is thirty five years old and works for a pharmaceutical company as a medical representative”(223). All her dreams are failed when she gets married with Ravindran. Their married life is not good. In the days of her earlier married days, she tries a lot to impress her husband Ravindran, but he couldn't. “She wishes there was some way she could discover his likes and dislikes. All she wanted to do was please him” (227).

Husband-wife alienation ensuring from lack of communication and unpredictable, in appropriateness form a very important issue of Anita Nair's novels. Here Anjana longs for love. She finds herself alienated from her husband due to lack of communication. Lack of understanding and incapacity to strike a sympathetic chord with Ravindran leads to discord. “Three months later he was still stranger to her. A man she cooked and kept house for. A man who used her body when she impulse took him. There was little conversation between them and hardly any companionship” (228).

One day Anjana's mother slipped and fell in the bathroom and broke her hip. In order to look after her mother, Anjana went to her mother's house. This situation made her some relief from her loneliness. “Even as she packed her bag, she felt relief course through her. She would be petted, loved, cosseted once again” (228). After two days, Ravindran came home and consoled Anjana that he planned to start a factory. He named the factory as Anjana Agarbathi. But after few years his business became failed. So his visits also reduced. The behaviour of Ravindran makes Anjana's parents irritation. Her father scold Ravindran that “When I gave you my daughter's hand in marriage, it was with the hope that you would love her. Cherish and protect her for the rest of her life. If all you intend to do is hurt her and made her unhappy, then there is no need for such a relationship. My daughter can manage very well without a husband like you” (232). Here Anita Nair shows Anjana has a smooth relationship with her parents. At

last Ravindran betrayed Anjana. He left Anjana from his entire life. Hence she feels, “Unloved, Unwanted with sunken cheeks and vacant eyes (233). Ravindran, her husband, considers Anjana “merely a servant who doubles as a whore” (243).

To change her mind Anjana’s father finds a suitable job. She got a teacher job. She enjoyed that job. She prefers to read books, magazines and carries a transistor like a baby. Anjana chooses a teacher job to escape from marriage life. As she is trapped by domestic chores she views education as a tool towards freedom from the familial bonds. Anjana’s growth from her unsuccessful marriage with the determination to live as a free individual is an assertion of her personal freedom.

Anjana meets Mukundan and falls in love with him. Mukundan is a coward person. When Anjana proposed her wish to Mukundan he said, “You must listen to me. I know you that I am a good man, a gentleman. Someone you can depend on completely. I don’t know if I am that man you make me out to be. My mother begged me to rescue her and take her away. But I didn’t. I was afraid of my father, and so I made excuse. If I had done as she asked me, perhaps she might still be alive. That is the kind of man I am, a weak and undependable creature. Do you want to be part of such a man’s life” (245-46).

Finally, Anjana takes a good decision of her own choice and self identity helps her to lead her life with hope and she proves that women can achieve liberty.

Anita Nair next novel ‘Lessons in Forgetting’ (2010), Meera is the protagonist of the novel, lived in a small house in Bangalore with her mother and grandmother, two children Nayantra and Nikhil and her husband Giri. Meera was a simple woman whereas her husband wanted to live a sophisticated life. “Meera never dreamt big dreams. She had no desire for designer clothes, diamonds or expensive holidays. Enough to keep roof over their heads and food

in their bellies. Enough to retain dignity and not to ask reluctant relatives for a temporary handout. Enough to live as they did” (41). So he insisted Meera to write a cook book. By writing a cook book, Meera became famous. By seeing her success, Giri wanted to run a business. As he needed money to run business asks Meera to sell the lilac house. But Meera refused to accept his decision. As Ravindran leaves Anjana in ‘The Better Man’, likewise here, Giri leaves the family and never turned to his family. This sudden disappearance makes Meera in stress and took her family responsibilities upon her. Her cook book was also not sold so she suffered financially. “We may starve to death but it will be in gracious surroundings” (111). In order to run her family, she joined as an assistant to Jak.

Jayam Kondan Anantharaman Krishnamurthy who is also known as JAK is the male protagonist of the novel. He married Nina, they had two daughters Smriti and Shruti. But their marital life was not well because of lack of communication. Both of them decided to get divorce and the two daughters were also separated where Smriti was taken care by JAK and Shruti by Nina. At last, Meera decided to start her new life with Prof. JAK. Throughout the story, JAK and Meera came close and decide to start a new beginning as both of them had troubled souls.

“All her aches to rush forward and give herself to him. To make his battles hers. To wish their lives and hopes. To fashion something out of nothing. But she knows that if she does this, the Meera she has become will wither and die forever. She will be there for him, Meera decides, but to keep herself alive, she will need to dredge all the selfishness that lies deep within her. That alone will ensure that JAK does not swallow her up, as once Giri did. ‘Yes, You must’, She says”(365).



Hence, with the increase of education, women started to take their own decision. As Meera Shirwadker observes:

“As women received education they began to feel an increasing urge to voice their feelings. The awareness of individuality, the sense of compatibility with their tradition-bond surrounding resentment of male dominated ideas of morality and behavior problems at home and at place of work or in society all come up in a welter of projection. (201)”.

Anita Nair narrates women's breaking the silence of suffering, trying to move out of the caged existence and asserting the individual self. She has showed the naked truth of the society. Her novels represent the new Indian woman's voice. The need for women to seek their identity is the message in her novels. As a novelist, Nair is all out to assert the dignity and equality of woman in family as well as the wider social sphere.

### Works Cited

- Agalya, K.A.A and Mahalaxmi. “ Realities and Redamption Anita Nair’s Lessons in Forgetting”. The Journal of Indian writing in English. Vol. 40. No.2 (July 2012) 1-2 print.
- Anu, Celly. “Women in Raja Rao’s Novel : A Feminist Reading of the Serpent and the Rope”, Jaipur : Pritwell, 1995 print.
- Deepa.K. “ The Portrayal of women in Anita Nair’s Ladies Coupe” Vol.13. Language of India. April 2013.
- Nair, Anita, Lessons in Forgetting. Penguin Books : New Delhi : 2010 Print
- Nair, Anita, The Betterman. Penguin Books : New Delhi : 2000
- Revethy.J.”Women and their decisions in Anita Nair’s novel ‘Lessons in Forgetting’ Vol.3. International Journal of English Research. June .2017.
- Shirwadkar, Meena. “ Images of woman in the Indo-Angalian Novel”, New Delhi : Sterling publishers , 1979 Print.
- Sinha, Sunita, ‘Post-Colonial Women : New Perspectives’ : New Delhi : Atlantic publishers & Distributors, 2008. , Print.